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The Falklands/Malvinas 1982:  
Why Didn't Argentina Win the War?

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## **Executive Summary**

**Title:** The Falklands/Malvinas 1982: Why didn't Argentina win the war?

**Author:** Major Ronald Schepel, Royal Netherlands Marine Corps.

**Thesis:** Argentina lost the Malvinas war because the British destroyed their will to fight.

**Discussion:** On 2 April 1982, Argentinean forces invaded the Malvinas. Three days after the invasion, the largest task force in recent British history left Great Britain. The Argentinean military junta had not foreseen a British military response. On 14 June – three weeks after the British landing – the Argentinean forces surrendered in Puerto Argentino.

Misinterpretation of British political signs before the invasion and misjudgment of British feelings of sovereignty over the islands left the Argentinean armed forces unprepared for war. Missed chances for success, poor leadership, and decisions on the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war resulted in Argentinean defeat. After the successful Argentinean invasion of the Malvinas the British dispatched a task force consisting of more than 100 ships. The Argentinean Navy was ordered back into port after the sinking of one ship – the Argentinean cruiser BELGRANO. An intensive air battle occurred prior to the land war that started with a British landing in San Carlos waters.

The Argentineans failed to defeat the British task force while still at sea. A more robust attitude of the Argentinean Navy could have done more damage to the British task force. Then the Air Force should have been launched. If the airport at Puerto Argentino – on East Falkland – had been improved to support jets this could have provided the Argentinean defenders air dominance to prevent a British amphibious landing.

**Conclusion:** London's military response left the Argentinean armed forces, merely designed as diplomatic tools and internal political force, unprepared for war. Argentina lost the Malvinas War because the British destroyed their will to fight.

## **Preface**

The following thesis is a result of my professional curiosity as a military officer. I believe lessons can be learned not only from why wars are won, but most significantly why wars are lost. It is a cliché believed by many that most books, articles, and journals on wars are written from the winner's perspective, however this is not always true.

I entered military service in the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps in 1984, just two years after the Argentinean invasion on the Falklands, and was commissioned as an officer in 1991. Within the United Kingdom/Netherlands Landing Force the professionalism of the Royal Marines in particular has been a special interest of mine. This has evolved into a high level of respect during collegial training, exercises, and professional military education. Clearly, the British won the Falklands war, but after being an officer for fifteen years I also want to know: “Why did the Argentineans lose the war?”

I have focused my research on the English written books on the Falklands war with the prism of analysis drawn from my years of military service. My conclusions can be important for fighting our future battles and winning our future wars. In past military conflicts, more lessons have been learned from failure than from success. Therefore this paper will not focus on the British successes that led to their victory, nor is it intended to dictate what the Argentineans should have done to win the war. Rather, I will leave those areas for others to unveil. This paper will focus on the mistakes the Argentineans made in 1982 that finally led to their defeat by the British forces.

Writing this paper would never have been possible without the support of my spouse, Patricia. This thesis represents the culmination of a year of learning that would not have been possible without LtCol P. Chandler USMC, Dr. F. Marlo, Dr. J.W. Gordon, and my mentor, Dr. D.F. Bittner.

### Note to the reader

The conflict in 1982 on the British owned group of islands, 400 NM east of the Argentinean coast, and 7,500 NM south of Great Britain, is usually referred to in English as the Falklands War, or the South Atlantic War. The Argentines, however, refer to the group of islands as Las Islas Malvinas. Consequently they speak about the Malvinas War. This paper focuses on the Argentinean perspective of the conflict. In order to enhance this point of view, the name Malvinas is used throughout the paper, as well as the Argentinean names for the places on the islands.

#### British names

The Falkland islands

Port Stanley

West Falkland

East Falkland

Pebble Island

South Georgia

#### Argentinean names

Las Islas Malvinas

Puerto Argentino

Isla Gran Malvina

Isla Soledad

Isla de Borbon

Georgias del Sur

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## **Introduction**

This paper will delve into the factors on the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war that eventually led to the failure of the Argentinean forces to win the Malvinas war. The Malvinas war ended in Puerto Argentino with the surrender of Argentinean forces on 14 June 1982. In the presence of the British Major-General Jeremy Moore, Argentine Brigadier-General Mario Benjamin Menendez signed a surrendering document that would end a war that lasted just over three months. During these three months over 11,000 Argentines occupied and reinforced the islands. The British dispatched a task force consisting of more than 100 ships, 6 submarines, 42 Harriers, and around 175 helicopters to recapture the islands. After the sinking of one single ship – the Argentinean cruiser BELGRANO – the Argentinean Navy was ordered back into port; after that, an intensive air battle occurred. When maritime and air superiority was established, the British forces executed an amphibious landing resulting into a bridgehead that culminated in heavy fighting around Puerto Argentino.

The British won the land campaign which was fought only in the last three weeks of the conflict. After some 40 miles of heavy marching and deliberate attacks on Argentinean defensive positions, British forces occupied a series of dominating ridges around the island's capital. Surrounded by British forces, General Menendez, at the time the military governor and commander of all the Argentine land, sea, and air forces in the Malvinas, realized the defense of Puerto Argentino<sup>1</sup> had no chance of success.

Before the conflict, the Argentines prepared over time for the actual invasion and the defense of the Malvinas. This advantage, as well as the extraordinary long and exposed British lines of communications to these distant islands, was not exploited. It is hard to understand that, with the long interest over generations within Argentina for the Malvinas, that they were not able to hold the islands in their possession and thus win the war.



The military junta made three fundamental mistakes. First, they underestimated the diplomatic and political messages of the British.<sup>2</sup> The Argentineans were therefore unprepared for a real war. The junta in Buenos Aires believed their action would result in only economic measures by the international community. They trusted ultimately to a successful transfer of sovereignty over the Malvinas from the British to Buenos Aires.

The Argentineans had not foreseen the British response, and therefore did not plan for the defense of the Malvinas after the invasion. General Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri – at the time Argentina’s president and commander of the Army – had not anticipated to fight a war to retain them. Vice-Admiral Juan Lombardo, who at the time commanded the Argentine naval units in the South Atlantic Theatre of Operations, to include the Falklands garrison, was asked how his superiors reacted. He stated: “They could not believe it; it seemed impossible that the British would go to such trouble over a place such as the Malvinas.”<sup>3</sup> The Argentineans realized the British did not have economic reasons to defend the Falklands, but misjudged the British in their feelings for sovereignty, and desire to defeat apparent aggression.

Second, the British proved, by the dispatch of a task force, that they were willing to fight a war over the Falklands. Argentinean military appreciation of the situation should have resulted in a well prepared plan for the defense of the islands; however the junta failed to do this. The Argentineans did send approximately 11,000 troops to the Malvinas, but primarily focused on their logistical sustainment. The junta failed to recognize that the British needed an amphibious landing to retake the Malvinas. A successful Argentinean defense of the Malvinas could have been possible by defeating the British Task Force while still at sea. Subsequently the Navy and Air Force had to be launched. By mining the most likely landing sites and bays to the west of Isla Soledad, the British would have been forced to conduct an amphibious landing within reach of the easier defendable mountains surrounding Puerto Argentino.

Third, the Argentinean forces were physically unprepared for war. The structure of the Argentinean armed forces relied on draft conscripts for one year. A time frame of one year was too short to train men to meet the professional skills of the British forces. Immediately after initial combat, the lack of experience and professionalism began to have a psychological effect on the Argentinean forces and their leadership. The proclamation of the Maritime Exclusion Zone, the retaking of Georgias del Sur, the threatening danger of British submarines around the Malvinas, and the sinking of the Argentinean cruiser GENERAL BELGRANO, were indications of more failure and losses to come. The raid on Isla de Borbon, the naval bombardment of Argentinean defensive positions, the operation “Black Buck” air attacks on Puerto Argentina airfield, and the successful amphibious landing of 3 Commando Brigade at San Carlos had a shocking psychological effect on the Argentineans. The battle at Goose Green/Darwin, was the first major land battle that started to break down the Argentinean’s hope for a successful end of the war. The Argentineans began to realize they could not meet the overwhelming professionalism, skills, and perseverance of the British troops. According to General Menendez: “the commanding officer at Goose Green was authorized to surrender whenever he thought is necessary. There was not really much point in continuing the resistance against an enemy who was far stronger and had him completely surrounded.”<sup>4</sup>

The Argentinean defeat was mainly caused by their misunderstanding of British political signals, bad strategic preparation, and the breakdown of their will to fight. Within these broad outlines a number of important strategic, operational, and tactical factors need to be further examined. Most likely, the conclusions of this paper will not be surprisingly new to earlier papers and books. The lessons learned, however, when seen from the Argentinean perspective may be important to avoid defeat in future battles and wars. Many lessons can be learned from British success, but important lessons can be learned from Argentinean failure too.

## **Methodology**

When assessing the reasons why the Argentines lost the war, two factors are of major importance for any commander in order to assess the enemy and command his own troops. Firstly, intelligence, for as Sun Tzu stressed: "Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril"<sup>5</sup> Secondly, Command, Control, and Communications (C<sup>3</sup>), for without a solid C<sup>3</sup> structure the chances of success in battle will be low. Furthermore, the conflict must be assessed from the naval, air, and land war perspective, as it was fought on, in, and from all three dimensions.

## **Intelligence**

The Argentinean armed forces lacked a structured intelligence gathering capability that could enable them to interpret the British strategic intentions. Additionally, the ruling junta failed to realize the seriousness of the British when they dispatched such a large amphibious task force. General Galtieri did not exploit the logistical challenge the British faced, once he realized the Falklands had to be defended against a British counter invasion. There was no structured plan for the defense of the islands because the original plan for the occupation of the Malvinas did not contemplate the possibility of a British military reaction.<sup>6</sup> The junta based its contingency plan after the retaking of the Malvinas on three gambles or assumptions. First, the United Nations' sanction of the invasion. Second, whom would the US support Argentina or Great Britain? Last, a belief the British would not actually respond in a military way to bring the islands back under British rule. The outcome of these gambles proved to be disastrous and ultimately left no time for the junta to mount a proper defense campaign. In fact, when General Menendez was sent to the islands, his initial orders were to be the eighth Argentinean governor of the Malvinas, and to look after the kelpers.<sup>7</sup> "General Galtieri told me I would have the great responsibility of reintegrating the islands into the Argentinean nation and of trying to win over the local

population.”<sup>8</sup> After the dispatch of the British Task Force, when Galtieri told Menendez that he had to defend the Malvinas, he reacted: “What the hell are you talking about?”<sup>9</sup>

The landing at San Carlos Bay, took General Menendez by surprise. His plan for the defense of the islands was to heavily defend two Argentinean decisive points: The airport of Puerto Argentino and the capital itself. The Argentineans were in a favorable defensive position, but Menendez failed to use his Pucara air patrol aircraft for target acquisition, intelligence, and patrolling. According to Menendez: “The target clearly was Puerto Argentino, and it was there and its airfield that we had to concentrate our forces, because we could not move them around.”<sup>10</sup> To the north and west, the capital was protected by a natural ring of mountain ridges, potentially excellent defensive positions. The British possessed excellent cold weather and mountain warfare capabilities which could not have escaped the attention of Argentinean military attachés in London since the early 1970s. Especially the commander of the navy, Admiral Jorge Isaac Anaya, who was a close friend of General Galtieri and the longest sitting member of the junta, failed to inform Menendez about the specific British capabilities.<sup>11</sup>

This left Menendez and his staff to believe an attack from the north and west side of the capital was unlikely. This false feeling of safety caused Menendez’s staff to focus more on a believed British course of action, attacking Puerto Argentino from the south and west in an amphibious assault. The Allied Tactical Publication 8A (ATP8A), defines an amphibious operation as “an operation launched from the sea, against a hostile or potentially hostile shore.” Proper intelligence preparation of the battlefield should have taught the Argentineans that the British had moved away from attacking fortified hostile shores as in an amphibious assault. This shift had occurred after the doctrinal publication of “The United Kingdom’s Approach to Amphibious Operations (1974).”<sup>12</sup> The difference is the British since then defined an amphibious operation merely as, “an operation launched from the sea to secure a beachhead on a

shore, to enable the conduct of subsequent operations.” The risk of high casualties in an initial assault, was to be avoided – and thus should have been assessed. This misconception helped the British develop a successful deception plan to make the Argentineans believe the actual objective was the capital.<sup>13</sup>

In an exclusive interview with “*Armed Forces Journal International*” (AFJI) in September 1992, General Basilio Lami Dozo, who at the time was the CINC of the Argentinean Air Force, stated that it was a wrong intelligence assessment to make the warships the first priority for targeting from the air. Attacking the British supply ships and merchant vessels, positioned 100 NM east-northeast of Puerto Argentino and 500 NM from the Argentinean Air Force base Rio Grande, should have been the main priority. This would have depleted Admiral Sir John “Sandy” Woodward’s logistical capability. It would have brought the British closer to a logistical culminating point that would have weakened their position at the negotiation table, possibly leading to a truce. However, other factors arose, as Brigadier Horacio Mir Gonzales, at the time of the conflict a young captain Mirage V aviator, explained, “We attacked whatever we could attack, if and when we saw it! We had no forward air controller and coordination with our ground forces was very poor.”<sup>14</sup> The time-distance in relation to the refueling capacity of Argentinean jets allowed them only seconds over the target itself.<sup>15</sup>

At the tactical level, the Argentineans didn’t actively seek intelligence; rather they were in a reactive mode to British action. Most of the Argentinean intelligence reports that were sent to the headquarters in Puerto Argentino came from units under fire.<sup>16</sup> They certainly did not contain information on the enemies’ future most likely courses of actions. The Argentineans not being able to foresee British actions were thus out cycled in nearly every combat event. This resulted in a psychological downward spiral of their will to fight.

## **Command, Control, and Communications**

Although Operation “Rosario”, the retaking of the Malvinas, was planned well before the invasion, the actual tactical landing operation itself was hastily planned. The operation, codenamed “Azul”<sup>17</sup> which was later renamed “Rosario”, was originally planned in strict secrecy by a small working team of only three generals.<sup>18</sup> It was specified that the armed forces would not be able to implement it until 15 May.<sup>19</sup> Poor coordination at the strategic level caused a weak plan at the tactical level. The Air Force was only informed a few days before the invasion while the Army and Navy hardly talked to each other. At all levels, decision-making was slow and confused because the command structure was based on the organization for the military government, and thus lacked sound military command and control. The only military experience the junta had was that of many years of internal counter-insurgency.<sup>20</sup> The Argentinean junta, governing through political compromise, was also the military leadership but it lacked a war fighting mentality. Improvisation, confusion, lack of coordination, and desperation prevailed along the command structure once actual combat operations commenced. Operational and tactical commands seem to be pulling apart between the political imperatives of the high command in Buenos Aires that transcended to the islands and the military imperatives of the front. This lack of jointness was critical when combat operations occurred.<sup>21</sup> In some occasions, the junta members directly gave orders to Menendez and commanders in the Area of Operations, frustrating the command relationship with members of the Military Committee.<sup>22</sup>

In April and May 1982, when operation Rosario was completed, General Galtieri disbanded the command of the Malvinas Operational Theatre. Now, with the Malvinas back under Argentinean rule, the islands fell under the South Atlantic Operational Theatre Command.<sup>23</sup> On 7 April, Galtieri sent General Menendez to Puerto Argentino to assume the role of governor. Menendez had to report to Commander South Atlantic Operational

Theatre, Vice-Admiral Lombardo. However, during the conflict, the Argentinean high command often gave direct orders to Menendez while ignoring Lombardo. On 26 April, Menendez restructured the military organization on the Malvinas by making himself the joint commander there, and Brigadier Jofre to command the defense of Puerto Argentino and Brigadier Omar Parada in command of the remainder of the islands. The new structure and organization gave clear command relationships but it was again frustrated. Each of the representative staffs of the three services who were sent forward out of political motivation, as well as the staffs of IX Brigade and X Brigade, did not want to give up their respective headquarters in the capital. Instead, they started to work with liaison officers, another potential for confusion and communication mishaps.<sup>24</sup>

One of the first major decisions, without consulting other junta members and one which by-passed Menendez, was the withdrawal of the Argentinean Navy after the sinking of the BELGRANO. As a result of this and the subsequent inaction of the Navy, Galtieri then closed down the South Atlantic Operational Theatre and established a joint operations center (CEOPECON) at Comodoro Rivadavia; this assumed overall responsibility for both combat and logistic support. General Osvaldo Garcia was appointed senior operations commander with a unified command beneath him. Menendez had to report to Garcia however in some occasions Garcia was bypassed and Menendez reported directly to Galtieri and vice versa.<sup>25</sup>

Despite this, individual junta members steered their own course in the war. Without consulting other junta members, Air Force commander General Lami Dozo sent a representative to Alexander Haig in the United States in an attempt to start negotiations with Britain. As General Lami Dozo said, “After the 3<sup>rd</sup> May ....I began to work on my own for

an agreement. Helped by US and Argentine officials I trusted, I scouted different ways to approach both sides.”<sup>26</sup>

General Galtieri failed to have an understanding of the serious situation confronting General Menendez. After the British victory at Goose Green and their landing at Bluff Cove on 8 June, despite the relative success of the Argentinean airstrikes on RFA SIR TRISTRAM and RFA SIR GALAHAD, Menendez was beginning to lose confidence in his troops. He withdrew many from the key-positions surrounding Stanley, repositioning his troops into a classic horse-shoe-shape defense, one that is normally hard to break. Then Galtieri ordered Menendez to launch an immediate attack on Bluff Cove and Fitzroy. Menendez realized that enough blood had been shed and that defeat was inevitable. It was probably Menendez’s most courageous decision, to ignore Buenos Aires and surrender on 14 June.<sup>27</sup> As the Argentineans started to understand that they were losing the war, the command and control situation deteriorated and service loyalties resurfaced.

At the tactical level, the reshuffling of troops, sometimes with no formal command and control arrangements for their deployment, led to strange situations. In several occasions at first enemy contact, the Argentinean command at battalion level was distorted in such a way that subordinate officers contacted the higher command in Puerto Argentino. For example, General Parada, the overall commander of ground forces outside the capital and therefore responsible for Goose Green, tried to coordinate that battle from Puerto Argentino. As Clausewitz said: “Everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult.”<sup>28</sup> It didn’t take long for confusion to overwhelm the system, and friction to jam operations. In the concluding battles for Puerto Argentino, General Jofre was unable to send his units forward to counter-attack the physically fatigued British forces, despite the amount of time and good communication equipment he had available to him and his men.



## **The Naval War**

The contrast in quantity, as well as quality, between the British and Argentinean navies was significant. The British Task Force, by the end of the conflict, consisted of 44 modern warships, 22 Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA), and 45 merchant ships. The two carriers, HMS INVINCIBLE and HMS HERMES, carried four squadrons of Sea Harriers supplemented by ten Royal Air Force Gr.3 Harriers. The Argentinean Navy possessed an old but well-balanced fleet, divided into two task forces. One was centered on their aircraft carrier VEINTICINCO DE MAYO while the other was composed of destroyers and an amphibious landing ship. The two hastily assembled task forces were sent to sea believing they were taking part in a large scale exercise near Patagonia. Hence, they did not know “Operation Rosario”, the invasion of the Malvinas, would be conducted by them.

Argentinean political leaders did not expect a British response to the invasion, and therefore at the operational level the Navy was not prepared for war. As Rear-Admiral Jorge Allara said: ” None of our plans envisaged an all-out engagement between the two task forces; the difference in strength made that impossible. My orders were to carry out limited operations, taking favorable opportunities.”<sup>29</sup>

After the invasion, the amphibious task force returned to Puerto Belgrano. Task Force 79 stayed at sea – just outside the British declared exclusion zone – to await the British Task Force Margaret Thatcher announced to send on 3 April. Neither side was aware of the other’s position at sea near the exclusion zone, when in early May much of the British effort was devoted to the opening attacks on the islands. The Argentinean admirals would never have a more favorable opportunity to strike than at that moment. However, Rear-Admiral Allara did not know that the British did not plan to conduct landings on the Malvinas then, while their ships were now concentrated. On 2 May, a significant reversal

occurred when the British submarine, HMS CONQUEROR, sank the ARA GENERAL BELGRANO just outside the exclusion zone. One shot destroyed the Argentinean Navy's will to fight for the remainder of the conflict. A more robust attitude of the Argentinean Navy at least could have done some damage to the British Task Force.<sup>30</sup>

The only Argentinean's Navy operational submarine, ARA SAN LUIS, did tie down the British anti-submarine assets for a short period of time. Gone to sea, unprepared for operations, with an incomplete and new crew, she carried out three torpedo attacks on British ships. All three attacks failed because the torpedoes malfunctioned, missed their targets, or failed to detonate as a result of a failure in the main control computer of the fire system.<sup>31</sup> As the author Philip Pugh said: "It's a remarkable fact that a lone diesel-electric submarine was able repeatedly to penetrate the anti-submarine defenses of a major task force drawn from a navy that had for some decades had anti-submarine warfare as its principal role and then to escape unscathed."<sup>32</sup>

Had the Argentinean Navy's remaining three submarines been functional the Argentinean admirals would have had the opportunity to strike the British Task Force on their way south to the Malvinas. As concluded by Commander Joseph Lodmell, U.S. Navy: "In a conflict with a significant maritime aspect that is confined to a relatively small area, any opposing submarines at sea will affect the JTF commander's operational decisions."<sup>33</sup> If the submarine threat had been created as a valid one, Admiral Woodward would have been forced to prevent damage to the critical British logistic capability, even before they had arrived in the arena. This would have had a major impact on the British posture and outcome of the conflict.

## **The Air War**

The outcome of the air war was a close run victory for the British. By far the Argentinean Air Force – including added naval air elements after the withdrawal of the surface Navy – became the main threat to the British. In just over 300 sorties launched from the Argentinean mainland, the Argentinean Air Force and Navy jets were able to sink three British warships, the critical logistic ship ATLANTIC CONVEYOR, and damage eight other vessels. Again, inter-service rivalry prevented important lessons learned to be shared between the Argentinean Air Force and the Navy. “The Navy failed to provide the Air Force with the radar direction that its pilots had expected. The Air Force failed to profit from the technique developed by Navy pilots of lobbing their bombs to provide them with enough ‘air time’ to fuse. The Air Force decision to bring returning pilots to widely dispersed bases to camouflage the scale of losses precluded effective debriefing and exchange of information about tactics.”<sup>34</sup> As General Lami Dozo said in his AFJI interview: “To make the warships our top priority wasn’t right. At the time I agreed, but I still wonder if it wouldn’t have been much better to first attack the merchant ships to deplete UK Task Force resources.”<sup>35</sup>

The 400 mile distance between the Argentinean mainland, and the absence of an Argentinean carrier in between caused the Argentinean jets to operate at the far range of their capability. This allowed only two to three minutes time on target when attacking the British Task Force. Showing creative innovation, the Argentines improved their air-refueling capability hence their air attacks came much further from the east than the British expected. However, the Argentines also made a fundamental mistake: “There was no time to extend the runway at Puerto Argentino, although PSP runway matting and aircraft barriers were available on the mainland. For this reason only Pucarás, Aermacchi, and T-34

Mentors were able to operate from any of the unprepared airstrips on the islands.”<sup>36</sup> The Argentinean high command was unwilling to expend resources on the airstrip at Puerto Argentino for the use of jets to operate from. Another factor also has to be noted as Alejandro L. Corbacho said: “In the Continent, the high command seemed more concerned about a possible engagement with Chile and they remained obsessed with that idea, even when the British Task Force was sailing towards the South Atlantic.”<sup>37</sup>

The distance between Argentinean mainland airbases and the Malvinas in combination with aircraft allocated to stand by on quick reaction alert to react on intelligence on British ship’s positions limited the Argentinean’s ability to send fighter escorts with their fighter-bombing aircraft.<sup>38</sup> A few diversionary maneuvers could have made the air attacks on San Carlos more successful, and could have had a major impact on British warships operating off the coast of the islands.

Despite the British bombings of the airstrip at Puerto Argentino, the Argentineans were able to keep an air-bridge open to the Argentinean mainland. The bombings were unsuccessful for three reasons. First, the British maps that Vulcan pilots used showed the airstrip off by 1,000 meters. The data used for these maps came from survey maps produced by Argentinean engineers who had constructed the airfield. They had made a mistake when plotting its position on these survey maps.<sup>39</sup> The limited damage the bombs made only hindered the Argentineans from using the airstrip for several hours. Second, the Argentineans made the British believe the bombings were successful by covering large parts of the airstrip with canvas. If seen from the sky, this made the runway look badly damaged. Third, the bombs the British used damaged the surface of the runway but because the runway was build on rock this did no damage to its foundation; hence repairs were easily and quickly done. The Argentinean Air Force, using nine Hercules C-130 transports, a

small number of Fokker F-28s, Lockheed Electras, and Boeing 737s, during the war made a total of almost 500 landings while carrying 5,500 tons of men and equipment into Puerto Argentino. The preponderance of flights was conducted at night, under heavy threat of British anti-air defense. As British RAF Flight-Lieutenant Ian Mortimer said: “Their Hercules pilots were fantastic. We never stopped them from getting into Port Stanley.”<sup>40</sup>

Despite all their efforts, the Argentineans lost the air war around the Malvinas. If the Argentinean Air Force had been able to mount fast jet air operations from the Malvinas, this would have given them a sortie rate that would have exceeded that of the British. Without the airstrip at Puerto Argentino, the number of sorties that could be generated in any day was restricted severely.<sup>41</sup>

### **The Land War**

The Malvinas War was no exception to the rule that the war on land in the end stipulates the result of a war. In contrast to the British Royal Marines and Paras, the Argentinean soldiers were mainly conscripts. Also, many of the soldiers committed to the the Malvinas had not finished their initial training, and an additional number of them were individually inserted to complete the units to acceptable combat strength.<sup>42</sup> The Argentinean Marines, as a part of the Navy, are distinct from the Army units. They received better training, and were relieved in conformity with a partial professional relief unit system. Platoons were drafted, trained, and inserted into companies, relieving the relatively oldest platoon, which was then demobilized. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Infantry Battalion was chosen to form the main landing force of the invasion and conducted amphibious exercises on the coast of the Valdés peninsula in Patagonia where there was a beach similar to the planned beach of the invasion near Puerto Argentino. The battalion practiced landing operations in February and March, but only three officers from the battalion knew they were rehearsing a

possible landing in the Malvinas.<sup>43</sup> After the successful invasion, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Infantry Battalion was relieved by three infantry brigades to defend the islands. The Argentinean forces were well equipped with the modern FAL FM 7.62 mm rifles and its 5.56 mm version, and the FARA 83. From their defensive positions the Argentineans were well supported by their indirect fire capability, and had a tactical advantage over the British attacking force in terms of numbers.

The number of forces committed by both the British and Argentineans were almost equal. The only remarkable result of a relative combat power analysis reveals the difference in professional training in favor of the British soldiers and Marines. In terms of weapons and equipment, and fire support capabilities, there were amazing similarities. The decisive distinction between the two belligerents was the individual quality of the Royal Marines and Paras, and the leadership of their commanders. When preparing for the defense, the Argentinean leaders showed very little if any concern for their men. Private Alberto Carbone said: “Lieutenant Baldini never said anything to us – we just followed him up the hills. It was like living in hell on that hill. Corporal Rios was the worst. Like most of the other corporals, he was a lazy bastard. None of our superiors showed the slightest concern for us.”<sup>44</sup>

The Argentineans lacked aggressiveness and didn't try to seize the initiative through active patrolling in the defense nor gain information on the British.<sup>45</sup> The British exploited this Argentinean behavior that allowed them to conduct close target reconnaissance at night and execute silent raids. The only assault that was conducted during daylight hours was the battle for Goose Green. The British knew they outclassed the Argentineans in tactical skills and chose to advance to contact mainly during the night in order to reduce casualties. This also had a shocking psychological effect on the inexperienced Argentinean soldiers.

With the landings at San Carlos and the battle for Goose Green, the British surely were gaining strategic and operational momentum. Margaret Thatcher wanted the war to end before mid-June, for the losses of Navy ships were causing major concerns. Had the British lost Goose Green, this would have given the political and military initiative back to the Argentines. Another example of bad situational awareness occurred days before the Argentinean surrender of Puerto Argentino. In the capital complete army units were stationed that had not been committed to reinforce the Army regiments and Marine battalion that were fighting heavily on Mt Longdon, Two Sisters, Mt Harriet, and Mt William. The Argentines had large amounts of ammunition and supplies in Puerto Argentino but lacked motorized transportation.<sup>46</sup> If these had been delivered to the units that needed it, the will to fight of the exhausted and outnumbered British soldiers who were dangerously short of ammunition, would have been effected.

In a large number of battles, the British outclassed Argentines but it would be unfair to accuse the Argentinean tactical commanders of lacking some basic military thinking. The professional core of the Argentinean Armed forces was well trained and educated. Many career officers and non-commissioned officers were additionally trained by the USMC, and had participated in US-led exercises. They were fully aware of the need for an obstacle plan in front of their defensive positions, and the need for coordination of mutual support between positions. The combination of the lack of supplies such as fortification materiel, and rations, and the weather – a large number of soldiers were from the northern part of Argentina – had drained the combat efficiency and discipline from the units. Some soldiers were cocooning, i.e. staying out of the elements seeking personal survival after several weeks of digging and waiting. As Major Berazay said when he first arrived on the islands: “My first impressions on seeing the Malvinas were: one that our

clothing would be inadequate and, two, that we never had carried out exercises in country like that.”<sup>47</sup> The Argentinean high command withdrew their best trained units – the invasion force – to guard the Chilean border and sent three brigades filled with hardly trained conscripts to defend the Malvinas.<sup>48</sup> The contrast with the British ground forces could not have been greater. For example Royal Marines Commandos, on a three year rotation, in their winter, executed exercises in northern Norway above the Arctic Circle, making them winter warfare specialists.<sup>49</sup>

Three important aspects of military leadership are morale, cohesion, and the buddy system. First, the British have a long history of combat experience from which the role and respect between the officers and their NCOs have been institutionalized. Second, British leaders at all levels have come to understand that the interests and welfare of their subordinates are of major importance for the vertical bonding and mutual trust between the leaders and led. Third, the British have learned through hardship during their winter deployments in northern Norway, and in counter insurgency operations in Northern Ireland, that every soldier and marine must have a buddy to look after him. This reciprocal care for each other is the basis for a high level of accountability and the assurance that orders are carried out under high stress combat circumstances.

The situation in the Argentinean Army was totally different. The division between officers, NCOs, and conscript soldiers was enormous. Command relationships were mainly based on difference in rank, and not on mutual respect. Alberto Carbone, an Argentinean conscript, describes the situation on Mt Longdon: “We were all supposed to get the same food, but you could stand there and watch the preferential treatment for officers and so-called superiors, .... big chunks of meat wrapped in nylon film, .... had to go to the officers.”<sup>50</sup> The NCOs did not have much responsibility, and in return did not show much



initiative, nor was taking the initiative encouraged. The attitude of not doing more that asked for prevented them from making mistakes.<sup>51</sup> The lack of synergy between the Argentinean officers and men, the reverse of what existed amongst their British counterparts, resulted in poor pro-activity and caused the leadership to break down when stressed under combat pressure.<sup>52</sup> The author Max Hastings drew the contrast, commenting that the British, “were part of a professional fighting force, perhaps the most highly trained and best-equipped that Britain had ever sent to war. Units welded by years of working in concert. The principal sensation among both officers and men were exhilaration at the chance to test their skills, and utter assurance in their own ability to defeat the enemy.”<sup>53</sup>

The Argentinean supply system on the islands could sustain one brigade for a month, the length of time they had been briefed to remain. After heavy reinforcement, there were more than 11,000 men to be fed for three months. The Argentinean logistic support to troops on the islands faced three challenges. First, after the sinking of the *BELGRANO* and the subsequent withdrawal of the Argentinean Navy to their home ports, the only way Menendez and his men could be logistically supported was by air. Second, besides British naval dominance, the constant air threat of British Harriers only allowed air supply at night by low flying Argentinean C-130s. Third, once supplies reached the islands, there was simply not enough heavy motor transport available to deliver the supplies to the defensive positions. Thus, an enormous amount of logistic supplies just clogged the streets of Puerto Argentino.<sup>54</sup> The supply chain of the British was much more fragile than that of the Argentineans. Long Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) ran via Ascension Island, amphibious shipping, and beachheads. Although this system had been trained for many years during pre-Norway deployment logistic exercises called “Clockwork”, still the British

neared their logistical culmination point when the Argentinean defeat was close. Forward deployed artillery would have run out of rounds if the fight lasted much longer.<sup>55</sup>

Besides good meals, the issue of mail is well known to be a tremendous morale booster and force multiplier. On some occasions when the Argentinean conscripts needed it most, mail was kept behind by their leaders. According to Alberto Carbone: “Mail was also a problem. We rarely received any. Our morale was suffering. It was until the latter stages of the war that we found letters piled up in a sergeant’s position, many of them addressed: *Al Soldado Argentino* [To the Argentinean Soldier] from well-wishers back home.”<sup>56</sup>

## **Analysis**

At the strategic level, the Argentinean military junta did not prepare their army, air force, and navy for a war. With a small submarine force with very limited operational capability, incomplete air squadrons, and malfunctioning bombs, the Argentinean military had hardly any chance to defend the Malvinas against a modernly equipped and fully professional British Task Force – if Britain decided to retake the Malvinas. This misinterpretation of the British response to an Argentinean invasion of the Malvinas proved to be a fatal strategic error.

Then it was an operational mistake to try to fight the British Task Force in a defensive land war. Taking the initiative in a naval battle supported by Argentinean air assets, before the British arrived in the area, could have hampered the British war plan. It might have made an amphibious landing impossible.

Not enabling the Argentinean Air Force to fly their jets from Puerto Argentino by improving the air strip was a major operational misjudgment. Hence, the fear of a never materialized Chilean threat negatively influenced the Argentinean chances to defeat the British. In addition, the incomprehensible decision by the Air Force not to attack the British

vulnerable logistical shipping just out of range but to focus on British warships was another operational blunder.

On land, the Argentinean Army never took the initiative due to their defensive attitude of the Argentinean operations, and the tactical lack of target acquisition, no surveillance on their enemy, and poor leadership. This was partly due to the decision to place an under-trained and inexperienced conscript force on the Malvinas opposed to a well experienced, arctic trained and fully professional adversary. This was maybe the worst operational mistake Argentinean commanders made.

## **Conclusion**

The Argentinean invasion of the Malvinas in 1982 was based on erroneous assumptions. Misinterpretation of British political signs before the seizure and misjudgment of London's possible response left the Argentinean armed forces as merely diplomatic tools and an internal political force instead to be prepared for war. Missed chances for success coupled with poor leadership and flawed decisions at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war enabled the British, possessing a thin logistical edge supporting their professionally capable force, to retake the Falklands. The Argentineans failed in their attempt to win the Malvinas war because the British destroyed their will to fight.

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## APPENDIX A

### Geographical Overview of Las Islas Malvinas in Relation to Argentina and Great Britain



## APPENDIX B

### Chronology of Main Events<sup>1</sup>

- 18-19 March Argentinean scrap metal workers land at Leith Harbour, Georgias del Sur, and raise the Argentinean flag.
- 2 April Operation Rosario. Argentina invades Las Islas Malvinas.
- 3 April Argentina invades Georgias del Sur. UN passes Security Council Resolution 502. Margaret Thatcher announces dispatch of Task Force to recapture the islands. First RAF transport aircraft deploy to Ascension Island.
- 5 April First Task Force ships sail from Great Britain.
- 7 April Britain declares a maritime exclusion zone of 200 miles centered on the islands to come into effect 0400 hours, 12 April.
- 23 April Great Britain warns Argentina that any approach by Argentinean warships or military aircraft which could amount to a threat to the Task Force and would be dealt with appropriately.
- 25 April British forces recapture Georgias del Sur (Operation Paraquat). Submarine SANTA FÉ attacked and disabled.
- 30 April Total exclusion zone comes into effect.
- 1 May First attack by Vulcan, Sea Harriers, and warships. First Argentinean aircraft shot down.
- 2 May GENERAL BELGRANO sunk by HMS CONQUEROR, approximately 35 miles south-west of exclusion zone.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Falkland Campaign: The Lessons Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Defense* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, December 1982), 13/14. Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the Malvinas* (New York: USA, Viking 1989), 67; and Stephen Badsey, Rob Havers, and Mark Grove, *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On, Lessons for the Future* (New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 4/5/6.

4 May	HMS SHEFFIELD hit by exocet missile; later sinks.
7 May	Great Britain warns Argentina that any Argentinean warships and military aircraft over 12 miles from the Argentinean coast would be regarded as hostile and liable to be dealt with accordingly.
9 May	Two Sea Harriers sink trawler, NARWAHL, which had been shadowing task force.
11 May	HMS ALACRITY sinks store ship CABO DE LOS ESTADOS in Falkland Sound
14/15 May	Special Forces night raid on Isla de Borbon. 11 Argentinean aircraft destroyed on the ground.
21 May	3 Cdo Bde establishes beachhead at San Carlos. HMS ARDENT lost; some 15 Argentinean aircraft destroyed.
23 May	HMS ANTELOPE crippled (sinks on 24 May). 10 Argentinean aircraft destroyed
24 May	18 Argentinean aircraft destroyed. Some damage to ships.
25 May	HMS COVENTRY lost and ATLANTIC CONVEYOR hit by exocet (sinks 28 May). 8 Argentinean aircraft destroyed. Air Force commander Lami Dozo sends peace envoy to New York.
28 May	2 PARA recapture Darwin and Goose Green. LtCol "H" Jones killed, later awarded the Victoria Cross.
30 May	45 Cdo secure Douglas settlement; 3 PARA recapture Teal Inlet; 42 Cdo advance on Mount Kent and Mount Challenger.
1 June	5 <sup>th</sup> Brigade commences disembarkation at San Carlos.
6 June	British have around 8,000 troops on Isla Soledad.
8 June	RFAs SIR GALAHAD and SIR TRISTRAM hit at Fitzroy. 10 Argentinean aircraft destroyed.

- 11/12 June Mount Harriet, Two Sisters, and Mount Longdon secured; HMS GLAMORGAN hit by shore-based exocet, damaged but seaworthy.
- 13 June Mount Tumbledown, Wireless Ridge, and Mount William secured.
- 14 June General Menendez surrenders all Argentinean forces on Isla Gran Malvina and Isla Soledad. They are taken prisoner and subsequently repatriated.
- 12 July Britain announces that active hostilities over the Falklands are regarded as having ended. The Argentineans fail to make any similar statement.
- 22 July Total exclusion zone lifted.
- 25 June Mr, later Sir, Rex Hunt, Civil Commissioner, returns to Port Stanley.

## APPENDIX C

### Argentinean Table of Organisation and Table of Equipment<sup>2</sup>

#### Army

3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade (1,675), Brigadier-General Omar Edgardo Parada

9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, Brigadier-General Américo Daher

10<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade (8,500), Brigadier-General Oscar Luiz Joffre

#### Navy

1<sup>st</sup> Marine Infantry Brigade (1,300), comprised of two battalions (relieved after initial invasion)

1 Aircraft Carrier, 1 Cruiser (sunk)

6 Destroyers, 3 Frigates, 2 Submarines (1 captured), 9 Merchant Vessels (all lost)

Naval attack air: 5 Super Etendards, 8 Skyhawks

#### Air Force

Commander 9<sup>th</sup> Air Brigade, Brigadier-General Luis Castellano

8 air Brigades with A-4P Skyhawks, IAI Daggers, Mirage III-E fighters

#### Invasion force

Commander Landing Force	General Osvaldo García; later he was given the title of Military Governor of the Malvinas, Georgias del Sur, and the South Sandwich Islands
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Commander naval Task Force	Admiral Jorge Allara
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Commander Marine landing troops	Rear-Admiral Carlos Busser
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#### Dispositions during the conflict

##### *Around Puerto Argentino under General Joffre of 10 Brigade*

3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 25<sup>th</sup> Regiments (approximately 1,000 men each)

5<sup>th</sup> Marine Battalion (about 600 men)

3<sup>rd</sup> Artillery Battalion (30 X 105 mm, 4 X 155 mm guns)

An armoured car squadron with 12 Panhard vehicles

181 Military Police and Intelligence Company

601 Anti-Aircraft Battalion

A helicopter unit with 2 Chinook, 9 X Huey UH1H, 2 X Augusta 190a attack, 3 X Puma aircraft

##### *Around Goose Green*

2<sup>nd</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> Regiments (elements of)

Elements of 601<sup>st</sup> AA battalion

3 X 105 mm guns

Air Force elements

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<sup>2</sup> Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1984), 178; and Middlebrook, *The Fight for the Malvinas*, 58/59.



*On Isla Gran Malvina under General Parol of 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade*

8<sup>th</sup> Regiment

9<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company (-) at Fox Bay

5<sup>th</sup> Regiment

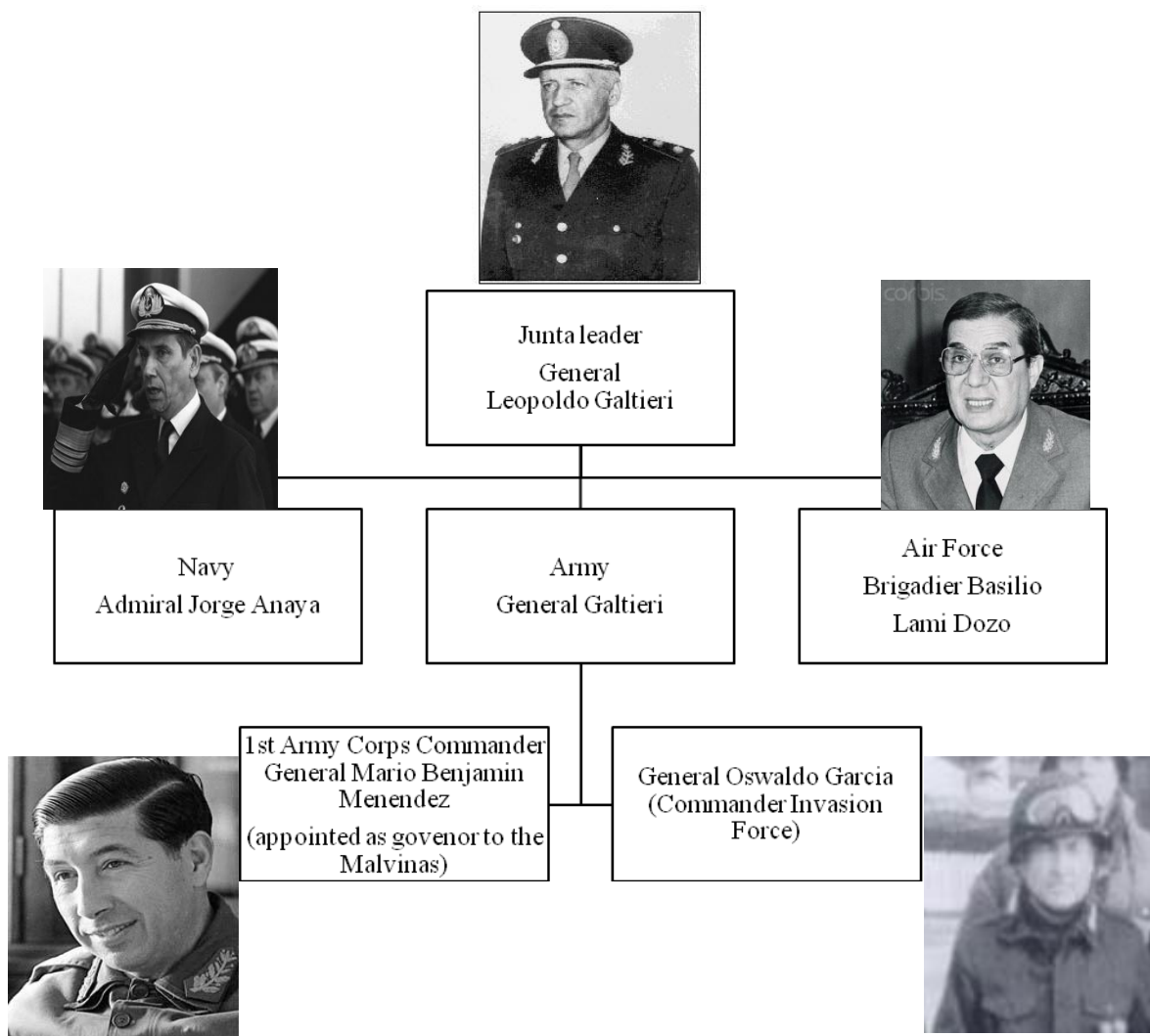
9<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company (-) at Port Howard

120 naval personnel on Pebble Island

Argentinean losses: 655 killed, 12,700 taken prisoner

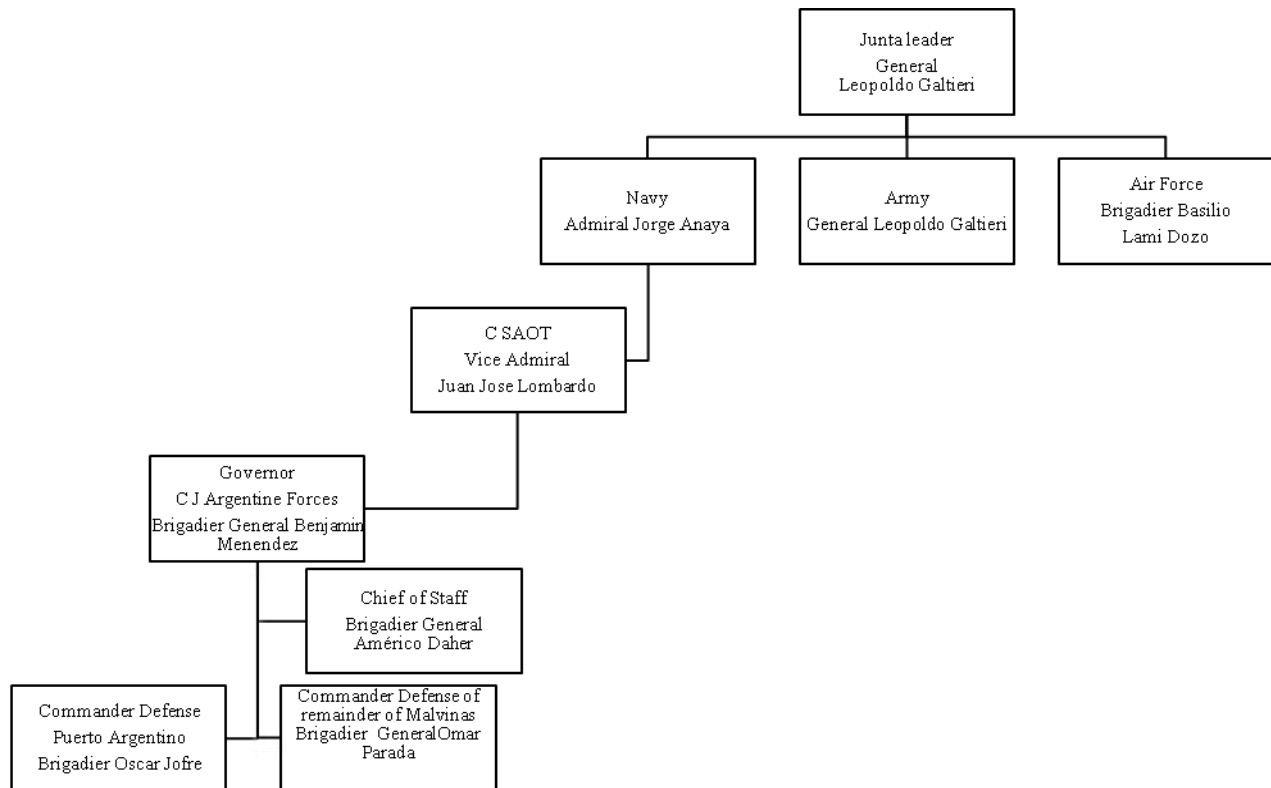
## APPENDIX D

### Argentinean command situation leading up to and after the invasion



Above: The command situation leading up to and after the invasion. After the invasion, when General Menendez was appointed as the governor of the Malvinas, General Galtieri declared the South Atlantic Operations Theatre (SAOT) in force under command of Vice Admiral Juan Jose Lombardo. This command structure was as described below.

On 26 April, Menendez restructured the military organization on the Malvinas by making himself the joint commander there, with Brigadiers Jofre to command the defense of Puerto Argentino and Brigadier Omar Parada in command of the remainder of the islands.



The new structure and organization gave clear command relationships but it was again frustrated. Many times during the conflict, the Argentinean high command gave direct orders to Menendez, thus ignoring Lombardo. Without consulting other junta members, and by-passing Menendez, Galtieri closed down the South Atlantic Operational Theatre and established a joint operations center (CEOPECON) at Comodoro Rivadavia to assume responsibility for both combat and logistic support. General Garcia was appointed as the senior operations commander.

## APPENDIX E

### British Table of Organization and Table of Equipment<sup>3</sup>

#### Landing Force

3<sup>rd</sup> Commando Brigade RM, 5<sup>th</sup> Army Infantry Brigade (28,000 combat or combat support troops)

#### Royal Navy

2 Aircraft Carriers, 8 Destroyers (2 sunk), 15 Frigates (2 sunk), 1 Ice Patrol Ship, 8 Amphibious ships (1 sunk), 12 Troop Transports (1 sunk);

#### Naval Air

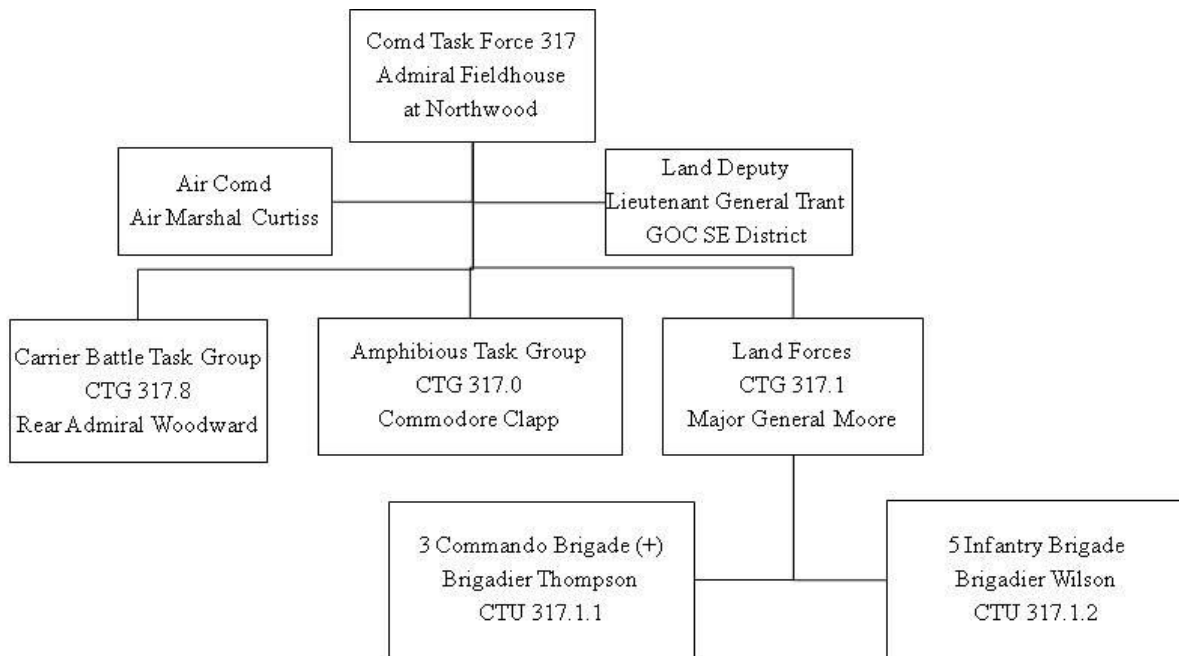
15 squadrons with 171 aircraft and helicopters

#### Royal Air Force

15 squadrons with Harriers, Vulcans, Hercules C-130 transports, Chinooks.

#### Losses: 255 killed

Although some changes in command relationships occurred during the campaign, this table represents the situation from 12 May 1982.



<sup>3</sup> Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, 316/318/178; Middlebrook, *The Fight for the Malvinas*, 58/59/282/283; and Badsey, Havers, and Grove, *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On, Lessons for the Future*, 90.

## APPENDIX F

### More in Depth Discussion

#### **British deception plan**

The British deception plan to make the Argentines believe the actual objective was the capital was successful. Misleading attacks on Fox Bay and Darwin, and airstrikes on defensive positions around Puerto Argentino, contributed to this belief. The Argentines also erred in not accurately assessing the total strength of the British Task Force. They suspected General Jeremy Moore had a second brigade at hand to move into Puerto Argentino. Menendez initially thought the landing at San Carlos was a diversion, and finally sent a Pucara air patrol to ascertain the size of the amphibious force.<sup>4</sup> Menendez claimed: “Initially we thought that the landing at San Carlos could have been a diversion, and that’s why I ordered our planes to recce the area.”<sup>5</sup> He considered a counter-attack on the British beachhead but realized the capital and its airfield would then be vulnerable to the “second British brigade.”

#### **Argentinean lack of jointness**

Three illustrations show the lack of jointness at the political level that seeped top down through the total of the command structure that slowed communication, caused disruption and the issue of contradictory commands. First, the service commanders, Galtieri, Lami Dozo, and Anaya remarkably didn’t travel together when they visited Menendez in Puerto Argentino from 19 to 22 April. Second, after the withdrawal of the Navy when the BELGRANO was sunk, the other services were unwilling to accept orders from the commander of the South Atlantic Theatre of Operations (TOAS), Vice Admiral Juan Jose Lombardo. Third, when X Brigade, under

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<sup>4</sup> Middlebrook, *The Fight for the Malvinas*, 165.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Bilton and Peter Kominsky, *Speaking Out* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1989), 218.

Brigadier Oscar Jofre, arrived on Isla Soledad it proved impossible to join the two staffs of X Brigade and Brigadier Américo Daher's IX Brigade already there. Menendez chose Jofre to stay on the islands as the Land Forces Commander. Daher returned to the mainland, but was eventually send back to become Menendez's chief of staff. As a culmination of the inter-service rivalry, individual members of the junta established a representation of their service on the islands – not to benefit the armed forces as a whole but merely for themselves. As Robert L. Scheina has stated<sup>6</sup>, "... jointness only existed at the operational and tactical levels, during the conflict. At the tactical level, it were the mid-level officers who put aside service parochialism to confront a common enemy." At the strategic and operational level, command and control was characterized by inter-service rivalry and by-passing the chains of command.

### **More robust attitude of the Argentinean Navy**

A comment made by Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, "If the Navy had dispersed its ships, they could have broken out by night to stage hit-and-run Exocet raids against the British. The threat of the VEINTICINCO DE MAYO and a task force presence of some Argentinean type 42 destroyers and type 21 frigates would have limited the British freedom of maneuver and forced Admiral Woodward to protect his logistical shipping even more. There was a certainty of losing some units to the Royal Navy submarines, but also an equal certainty of being able to effect British operations by damaging or destroying some of their assets. Clearly the prospect of heavy losses deterred the Argentinean admirals."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Robert L. Scheina, "Argentine Jointness and the Malvinas." (*Joint Forces Quarterly*, September 1994).

<sup>7</sup> Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, 323.

### **Argentinean failure to forge Air Force and Navy assets**

On the tactical level, the Argentinean pilots belong to the world's best trained pilots, flying three excellent jets: A-4 Skyhawks, Mirage III/V, and Delta Daggers. A significant amount of pilots, flying Mirage V Delta Daggers, were even trained by the Israeli Air Force. On the operational level, however, the Argentinean high command in Buenos Aires failed to forge together Air Force and Navy assets into a unified effort. Large combined raids against the vulnerable British during the San Carlos landings would have jammed their air defense capability and would have had a severe impact on the amphibious operation. This deficiency merged with Menendez' operational misjudgment assuming the San Carlos landings were merely a diversion would finally lead to British victory.

### **Priority of targets and aircraft losses**

"I also remember that the carriers were first-priority targets; the supply ships were secondary", said General Lami Dozo.<sup>8</sup> According to RAF Flight-Lieutenant Ian Mortimer, Argentinean pilots earned a reputation of bravery and daring during the war: "They took a lot of hits; they had a lot of losses. We really did make a mess of them and they kept coming back."<sup>9</sup> Both countries never have agreed on their losses because each define a loss and damage differently, hence sources claim different figures. Argentina claimed to have lost 57 aircraft, 15 helicopters, and 31 pilots in the war. The British estimates are 107 Argentinean aircraft,

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<sup>8</sup> J. C. D'Odorico, "An Exclusive Interview with: General Lami Dozo." (*Armed Forces Journal International*, September 1993), 40.

<sup>9</sup> Bilton and Kominsky, *Speaking Out* (London, Andre Deutsch, 1989), 92.

including 10 helicopters. Britain claims the loss of only 9 Harriers and 24 helicopters and just 3 pilots; however Argentina claimed to have shot 39 aircraft and 64 helicopters.<sup>10</sup>

The Argentinean Canberra air bombing never had a large success rate. In order to stay out of range of British anti-air defense, they had to fly at a high altitude and thus decrease their accuracy. Attempts to raise their success by flying at lower altitudes increased the risk of being shot down by Sea Dart missiles from British frigates.<sup>11</sup> The role of the 24 Pucara air patrol aircraft on the Malvinas was never exploited to the maximum. The success rate of this powerful ground-attack weapon could have been much better if employed in support of ground forces. Of the many missions the Pucarás flew, just one British Scout helicopter was shot down. Conversely, by the end of the war all Pucarás had been destroyed and two pilots were killed.

### **Lack of Argentinean initiative in the defense**

Rarely did Argentinean officers try to counter attack after first British fire contact. Had the Argentineans demonstrated initiative, and had they used their ability to maneuver, then the British advance towards Puerto Argentino would have been slowed down, to leave the exhausted Marines and Paras but to occasionally assume the defense and lose the initiative. An Argentinean counter attack by the unit embarked in a Chinook and six Huey helicopters that landed just south of Goose Green, would have caught 2 Para exhausted, and almost without ammunition, and fire support.<sup>12</sup> “2 Para had been halted for some two and a half hours so far, and if a counter attack was to be launched the battalion was at its most vulnerable.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Lt Col Ricardo A. Puche, “The Malvinas War from the Argentinean viewpoint.” (Manuscript, US Air War College, 1988) 37.

<sup>11</sup> Middlebrook, *The Fight for the Malvinas*, 89, and 102.

<sup>12</sup> Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, 248.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Adkin, *Goose Green: A Battle Is Fought to Be Won* (London: Cassell & Co, 1992), 243.



## **Composition and quality of Argentinean units**

Most Argentinean units, due to the one year conscript system and the early training stage of those troops in the Malvinas, lacked any form of cohesion and unit loyalty. When the fighting started, most conscripts cared for their individual survival. Teamwork, coordinated actions, and support were therefore scarce and often misdirected. The unit cohesion within the Argentinean Marines, artillery, and Special Forces units, however, was relatively high. Firstly, most of those units were composed of career NCOs and officers only. They trained and often served in those units for longer than one year. Secondly, the artillery units were just like the marines and special forces units, composed of relatively more officers and NCOs, and their initial Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) training took longer than most other MOSs. Thirdly, the unique character of the artillery, Marines, and Special Forces units gave their members an elite feeling.<sup>14</sup> It was only in the final stages of the land war, when the British closed in on the Argentinean positions, that their level of cohesion and will to fight broke down to individual survival.

## **Failure of Argentinean logistics**

The contrast could not be more poignant. The military junta kept surprising Menendez by sending more troops, but that same junta made no attempt to improve the tactical supply distribution chain. A higher priority was given to moving ammunition forward to the units rather than food and medical supplies. Most of the ammunition had to be lifted up to the Argentinean defensive positions in the mountains by hand. As one Argentinean soldier recalled: “One helicopter could have done it all in one lift.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Vincent Bramley, *Two Sides of Hell* (London: Bloomsbury, 1994), 121.

<sup>15</sup> Bramley, *Two Sides of Hell*, 117.

## Argentinean medical support

Medical support is another important factor in creating and sustaining morale. Argentinean soldiers did not receive any medical training as part of their initial training as a conscript. The Argentinean medical evacuation chain ran through a field hospital in Puerto Argentino, to the Argentinean hospital ship BAHIA PARAISO. The ship was painted white, and under the rules of the Geneva Convention she was allowed to collect wounded soldiers from the Malvinas. However, when a wounded Argentinean soldier would make it to the field hospital he wasn't sure of good treatment. As surgeon Commander Rick Jolly of the Royal Navy said, "At the surrender, we captured their field hospital and then reoperated on all their patients because the Argentinean surgeons seemed to have just done a bit of fancy work ...."<sup>16</sup> Maybe the best hope for a wounded Argentinean soldier was to be captured and to be treated by British soldiers who were carrying morphine, intravenous fluid packs, and antibiotics.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Bilton and Kominsky, *Speaking Out*, 82.

<sup>17</sup> Bilton and Kominsky, *Speaking Out*, 149.

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Using Argentinean contributions, the author presents a very detailed account from both the British and Argentinean perspective. A very helpful book for this thesis.

Middlebrook, Martin. *Task Force. The Falklands War, 1982*. Revised ed., New York, Viking Penguin Books, 1987.

A very detailed and well researched book. The author again describes the conflict using sources from both sides. Helpful for this thesis.

Royal Navy, *The United Kingdom Approach to Amphibious Operations*, London 1997.

This book contains Britain's vision on amphibious operations in the final decade of the twentieth century.

Scheina, Robert L. *Latin America's Wars, The Age of the Professional Soldier, 1900-2001*

*Volume 2*, [Ch 33, The Malvinas (Falkland) Islands], Washington DC, Brassey's, Inc., 2003.

The author describes in clear sharp language the events that finally led to the Argentinean defeat. Very helpful for this thesis for its detailed account on technical details and Argentinean actions.

Thompson, Julian. *No Picnic, 3 CDO Brigade in the South Atlantic 1982*. London 1992.

A very tactical and therefore not very helpful book for this thesis.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Scheina, *Latin America's Wars. The Age of the Professional Soldier, 1900-2001 volume 2, [Ch 33, The Malvinas (Falklands Islands)]* (Washington DC, Brassey's, Inc., 2003), 308: "After the capture of Port Stanley, the Argentineans renamed the capital Puerto Argentino."

<sup>2</sup> Jorge O. Laucirica, "Lessons from Failure: The Malvinas Conflict" (*Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, Summer/Fall 2000), 85: "Despite seventeen years of warning signs, no one seemed to realize the explosive potential of the mounting conflict."

<sup>3</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *The Fight for the Malvinas* (New York: Viking 1989), 48.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Bilton and Peter Kominsky, *Speaking Out* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1989), 219.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel B. Griffith, *Sun Tzu, The Art of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 84.

<sup>6</sup> Middlebrook, *The Fight for the Malvinas*, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Duncan Anderson, *Essential Histories, The Falklands War 1982* (Oxford: Osprey, 2002), 29.

<sup>8</sup> Bilton and Kominsky, *Speaking Out* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1989), 215.

<sup>9</sup> Middlebrook, *The Fight for the Malvinas*, 48.

<sup>10</sup> Bilton and Kominsky, *Speaking Out*, 218.

<sup>11</sup> Middlebrook, *The Fight for the Malvinas*, 1, and 17.

<sup>12</sup> Royal Navy, *The United Kingdom Approach to Amphibious Operations* (London, 1997), 11.

<sup>13</sup> See APPENDIX F for more discussion on the British deception plan.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Badsey, Rob Havers, and Mark Grove, *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On, Lessons for the Future* (New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 78.

<sup>15</sup> Badsey, Havers, and Grove, *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On*, 77.

<sup>16</sup> Bilton and Kominsky, *Speaking Out* (London, Andre Deutsch, 1989) 218.

<sup>17</sup> Middlebrook, *The Fight for the Malvinas*, 25.

<sup>18</sup> Middlebrook, *The Fight for the Malvinas*, 1. "The commander of the Air Force was only informed one day prior to the invasion."

<sup>19</sup> Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1984), 31 and 59.

<sup>20</sup> Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, 323.

<sup>21</sup> See APPENDIX F for more discussion on Argentinean lack of jointness.

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<sup>22</sup> In addition to the junta members, the Military Committee consisted of the chiefs of staff of the three services and the commanders from the theatres of operations.

<sup>23</sup> See APPENDIX D.

<sup>24</sup> Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, 323.

<sup>25</sup> Alejandro L. Corbacho, “Argentine Command Structure and its Impact on Land Operations during the Falklands/Malvinas War (1982)” (Student Thesis, Universidad del CEMA, Buenos Aires, 2006), 9.

<sup>26</sup> J. C. D’Odorico, “An Exclusive Interview with: General Lami Dozo” (*Armed Forces Journal International*, September 1993), 40.

<sup>27</sup> Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, 325.

<sup>28</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 119.

<sup>29</sup> Middlebrook, *The Fight for the Malvinas*, 103.

<sup>30</sup> See APPENDIX F for more discussion on a more robust attitude of the Argentinean Navy.

<sup>31</sup> Robert L. Scheina, *Latin America’s Wars. The Age of the Professional Soldier, 1900-2001 volume 2, [Ch 33, The Malvinas (Falklands Islands)]* (Washington, DC: Brassey’s, Inc., 2003), 314.

<sup>32</sup> Philip Pugh, “The Empire Strikes Back: The Falklands/Malvinas Campaigns of 1982” (*The Mariner’s Mirror*, Vol. 93, No. 3, August 2007), 313.

<sup>33</sup> Commander Joseph Lodmell, U.S. Navy, “It Only Takes One,” *Proceedings*, December 1996, 32.

<sup>34</sup> Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, 323.

<sup>35</sup> See APPENDIX F for more discussion on the Argentinean failure to forge Air Force and Navy aviation assets.

<sup>36</sup> Lt Col Ricardo A. Puche, “The Malvinas War from the Argentinean Viewpoint,” (manuscript, US Air War College, 1988), 25.

<sup>37</sup> Corbacho, “Argentine Command Structure and Its Impact on Land Operations during the Falklands/Malvinas War (1982),” 12.

<sup>38</sup> See APPENDIX F for more discussion on the priority of targets and aircraft losses.

<sup>39</sup> Anderson, *Essential Histories, The Falklands War 1982*, 37.

<sup>40</sup> Bilton and Kominsky, *Speaking Out*, 92.

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- <sup>41</sup> Pugh, “The Empire Strikes Back: The Falklands/Malvinas Campaigns of 1982,” 319.
- <sup>42</sup> Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, 177.
- <sup>43</sup> Middlebrook, *The Fight for the Malvinas*, 5.
- <sup>44</sup> Bramley, *Two Sides of Hell*, 116, and 117.
- <sup>45</sup> See APPENDIX F for more discussion on the lack of Argentinean initiative in the defense.
- <sup>46</sup> Corbacho, “Argentine Command Structure and its Impact on Land Operations during the Falklands/Malvinas War (1982),” 12.
- <sup>47</sup> Middlebrook, *The Fight for the Malvinas*, 52.
- <sup>48</sup> Alejandro L. Corbacho, “Reassessing the Fighting Performance of Conscript Soldiers During the Malvinas/Falklands War (1982).” (Manuscript, Universidad del CEMA, September 2004).
- <sup>49</sup> Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, 321.
- <sup>50</sup> Bramley, *Two Sides of Hell*, 117.
- <sup>51</sup> See APPENDIX F for more discussion on the composition and quality of Argentinean units.
- <sup>52</sup> Bramley, *Two Sides of Hell*, 118, and 132.
- <sup>53</sup> Hastings and Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*, 189.
- <sup>54</sup> See APPENDIX F for more discussion on the failure of Argentinean logistical efforts.
- <sup>55</sup> Pugh, “The Empire Strikes Back: The Falklands/Malvinas Campaigns of 1982,” 317.
- <sup>56</sup> Bramley, *Two Sides of Hell*, 111.